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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 004369

SIPDIS

CENTCOM FOR POLAD

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/23/2015

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PNAT](#) [I2](#)

SUBJECT: PERELLI REAFFIRMS AUDITS WILL NOT AFFECT
REFERENDUM OUTCOME

REF: A. BAGHDAD 4352 AND PREVIOUS

[B](#). BAGHDAD 4110

[C](#). BAGHDAD 4321

[D](#). BAGHDAD 3975

Classified By: PolCouns Robert S. Ford, reason 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: UN EAD chief Carina Perelli and advisor David Avery told the Charge October 23 that the audit team conducting ballot counts in Erbil had discovered indications of fraud, but none that would impact the outcome of the vote (ref a). Perelli said that audit teams in Basrah and Babil had not discovered significant irregularities. Perelli predicted that the Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq (IECI) would announce the passage of the constitution on October 25 or 26, at which time it would also release the findings of the audit teams. Perelli said that the coalition registration deadline of October 28 (ref b) had reduced preparation time for the December 15 ballot to the absolute minimum. The Charge stressed the importance of the earliest possible announcement of referendum results. He urged that the IECI hold firm on the December 28 coalition registration deadline. END SUMMARY

[1](#)2. (C) UN Electoral Assistance Division chief Perelli and advisor David Avery updated the Charge October 23 on the results of the audit team trips to Basrah, Babil, Erbil and Ninewa (reftel). The first three teams have completed their spot checks of ballot boxes and returned to Baghdad. The team in Erbil found evidence of fraud -- e.g., markings that indicated leftover ballots had been filled out in stacks after polling centers closed. Perelli said that the likely impact of the team's findings would be to reduce the percentage of "yes" votes in Erbil to 75-80 percent, vice the current 99 percent. Noting that the referendum was always expected to pass in Erbil by a high margin, Perelli and Avery quipped that Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) activists had engineered the high vote as "practice" for the December election.

[1](#)3. (C) Perelli said that no evidence of significant irregularities had been discovered in the Shia-majority provinces of Basrah and Babil. She said that the audit team in Ninewa has completed inspections of two out of three warehouses and had uncovered nothing that would impact on the final vote tally for the governorate. Perelli added that the IECI has received only 120 complaints nationwide related to the referendum. She noted that this figure is statistically insignificant and that most complaints related to individual cases.

[1](#)4. (C) The Charge pressed for the earliest possible announcement of national referendum results. Perelli and Avery said that the IECI would announce final provisional results for all but the four audited governorates October 24. They predicted that the Commission would announce final provisional national results on October 25 or 26, simultaneously releasing the results of the audit teams' report.

[1](#)5. (C) Perelli and Avery said that the audit report would refer to evidence of fraud in Erbil. They added that in the coming weeks the IECI would issue a separate report on its review of the Kirkuk registration list (ref b). They said the report's findings could lead to the removal of over 80,000 names from the list. Perelli and Avery said they hoped the Erbil and Kirkuk reports would send a clear message to Kurdish leaders that their supporters must desist from partisan machinations at polling centers in December. They acknowledged that the reports would also send a clear message to Sunni Arabs, and others, of the IECI's sectarian-blind commitment to the integrity of the electoral process.

Registration Deadlines

[1](#)6. (C) Perelli said that the extension in coalition and candidate list registration deadlines (ref c) had reduced preparation time for the elections to the bare minimum.

She noted that the IECI had granted the extension to October 28 because Iraqi parties from all sides of the sectarian and political spectrum had failed to meet the previous October 21 deadline. Avery warned that political parties could force the IECI to grant another extension by failing to meet the October 28 deadline. Any further extension, Perelli warned, could force a delay in the December 15 election. She also predicted that an extension past October 28 would result in Iraqi parties asking for even more time to develop coalitions.

17. (C) Perelli and Avery said that if the December 15 election is postponed, it should be delayed for at least a month. The Charge said there should be no consideration given to postponing the election date of December 15 (Comment: Our reading is that such a postponement would not be permitted under the Transitional Administrative Law, per article 3 of the TAL which prohibits an amendment that could delay the holding of elections to a new assembly). Charge said the IECI should hold firm on the new October 28 deadline for coalition registration. Perelli said the election could also go forward without coalitions; there is more flexibility on the deadline for candidate lists.

Overseas Citizen Voting (OCV)

18. (C) Perelli said that the IECI expects to receive an OCV plan from the Foreign Ministry October 28. However, she said that the easiest outcome would be to have no, or very minimal, OCV in the December election. Perelli and Avery noted that OCV will only affect the allocation of national compensatory seats. They said that the greatest possible impact of OCV would be one additional Christian seat based on diaspora votes. Under the election law (ref d) this scenario would only occur if a Christian Party won enough nationwide votes (including OCV) to qualify for a seat, but failed to win enough of such votes in a single governorate.

Satterfield